

C 1
1. (Thrice Amended) A method of forming a meltable material at a joint between telescopingly engaged male and female elements, said method comprising the steps of:

directing the male element into the female element so that the male and female elements are telescopingly engaged and a radially facing joint surface on the female element surrounds a radially facing joint surface on the male element;

with the male and female elements telescopingly engaged, placing a ring of the meltable material around one of the male and female elements at a first location;

sliding the ring of meltable material guidingly directly against the one of the male and female elements from the first location to a second location at which no appreciable portion of the meltable material resides between radially facing portions of the male element and the female element;

heating the male and female elements at the joint to a temperature at which the meltable material melts;

with the ring of meltable material at the second location and the male and female elements at the joint at a temperature at which the meltable material melts, causing the meltable material to flow between the male and female joint surfaces; and

cooling the male and female elements at the joint to solidify the meltable material between the male and female joint surfaces.

c2 11. (Thrice Amended) A method of forming a meltable material at a joint between telescopingly engaged male and female elements, the female element having a free edge, said method comprising the steps of:

directing the male element into the female element so that the male and female elements are telescopingly engaged and a radially facing joint surface on the female element surrounds a radially facing joint surface on the male element;

with the male and female elements telescopingly engaged, placing a ring of the meltable material around the male element at a first location spaced from the free edge of the female element,

sliding the meltable material guidingly directly against the male element from the first location closer to the free edge of the female element to a second location at which no appreciable portion of the meltable material resides between radially facing portions of the male element and the female element;

heating the male and female elements at the joint to a temperature at which the meltable material melts;

with the meltable material at the second location, causing the melted meltable material to flow between the male and female elements; and

cooling the male and female elements at the joint to solidify the meltable material between the male and female joint surfaces.

C3 16. (Thrice Amended) A method of making a connection between male and female elements, said method comprising the steps of:

directing the male element into the female element so that the male and female elements are telescopingly engaged and a radially facing joint surface on the female element surrounds a radially facing joint surface on the male element;

providing a ring of meltable material;

with the male and female elements telescopingly engaged, directing one of the male and female elements through the ring of meltable material to a first location on the one of the male and female elements;

after directing the one of the male and female elements through the ring of meltable material, directing the male element into the female element so that the female joint surface surrounds the male joint surface;

with the male element in the female element, sliding the ring of the meltable material guidingly directly against the one of the male and female elements to a second location at which no appreciable portion of the meltable material resides between radially facing portions of the male element and the female element

heating the male and female elements at the joint to a temperature at which the meltable material and thereby causing the melted meltable material at the second location to flow between the male and female elements; and